

ESOTERIC STUDIES:
COSMIC "I" AND HUMAN "I"

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COSMIC “I” AND HUMAN “I”

THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

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WE NEED TO SPEAK a little further this evening about the nature of Jesus Christ, because today there is much discussion of this subject, especially in Theosophical circles, and because we face the very real need to become completely clear about many points in this area. Today we will discuss an aspect of the question that may appear somewhat strange to many, but is very important. We shall start with human evolution.

We know, of course, that human evolution has progressed in such a way that humanity in earthly evolution passes through certain cyclic epochs. Moreover, we have frequently mentioned that we can distinguish five cultural periods leading up to and including our time. These occurred since the great event we call the Atlantean catastrophe, through which life on the old Atlantean continent was transformed into life on the new continents: our life. We speak of the first, ancient Indian cultural epoch. We speak of the second, or great ancient Persian epoch; the third, or Egypto-Chaldean-Babylonian epoch; and the fourth, Greco-Roman, which,

for a more comprehensive worldview, receded, let us say, only between the eighth and the twelfth Christian century. Then we speak of our own, the present, fifth post-Atlantean epoch, beginning in 1413.

Human souls (hence, the souls of everyone sitting here) have gone through various incarnations in these successive cultural epochs up to the present time—one soul in many embodiments, another in a relatively smaller number. These souls, according to the characteristics of the epochs, appropriated this or that from their experiences, brought it with them from the earlier into the later incarnations, and then appeared as souls at a stage of development depending on what they experienced previously in the various cultural epochs.

Now, however, we can also speak of the fact that, of the various members of the human being, generally one or another (though usually a specific member) formed and developed in each cultural epoch; note well, however, that this was only generally the case. Thus, we can say that, if human beings allow all that our epoch of civilization can give to work upon them, they are called in particular today to develop what our spiritual scientific movement calls the consciousness soul. During the Greco-Roman epoch, the intellectual or rational soul was pre-eminently developed. The sentient soul developed during the Egypto-Chaldean-Babylonian epoch; during the ancient Persian, the sentient or astral body developed; and in the ancient Indian, what we call the ether body, or life body, developed. These members of human nature have reached their development in relation to individual souls passing through those cultural epochs in one or, in most cases, several incarnations. And,

in the time to follow our own as the sixth post-Atlantean epoch, the member that will be especially developed which we call spirit self. In theosophical literature, this has been designated *manas*. In the final, seventh post-Atlantean epoch, what we call life spirit, and theosophical literature calls *budhi*, will develop. Spirit body, or *atma*, will not evolve until a far-distant future, after another catastrophe. Thus, today and in the near future we are in the midst of the development through our environment, through the normal conditions of our civilization, of what we call the "consciousness soul."

We know that the entire development of the human being, this evolution of the individual soul members as we differentiate them, is related essentially to something else—the gradual incorporation of the human "I." For this incorporation of the human "I" into human nature is the entire purpose of the earthly evolution. Therefore, we have, as it were, two intermingling evolutionary streams, since we must go through the Earth evolution (following that of Saturn, Sun and Moon), and, as earthly humanity, we bring to development especially this fourth member, the "I." We join the "I" to the other principal members of human nature (the physical, ether, and astral bodies), which were prepared earlier. You must now distinguish this great, most important evolutionary stream, connected with the great embodiments of our Earth planet itself, from the smaller evolutionary stream, which I have previously described as playing its role within a period as short as the post-Atlantean epoch.

No one who has understood the matter up to this point should ask how it happened that human beings developed

the ether (life) body on the ancient Sun, and then a special development of the same body needed to take place during the ancient Indian epoch. No one who really understands should ask such a question, since these are the facts: Of course, there was preliminary work on the ether body during the ancient Sun; human beings came to Earth in possession of an ether body. Nevertheless, this body can now be formed more finely; the members that humankind developed later can work on it. The human ether body was naturally at a relatively high stage when incarnated in an ancient Indian body, but in this post-Atlantean period, we work upon our ether body with the "I" we have acquired. With all that human beings have gained in the meantime, we work on and refine it. Essentially, it is a refining of the various members of human nature that takes place in our post-Atlantean period.

If you now consider the entire evolution what has just been said, the fourth post-Atlantean epoch, the Greco-Roman, will seem especially important. What we call the rational, or intellectual, soul had to be worked upon and brought to a more refined form in the human being. By that time, however, the "I," which belongs to the greater evolutionary stream, had already experienced a particularly high degree of development. Therefore, we can say that, up to the fourth post-Atlantean period, the Greco-Roman time, this human "I" had evolved to a certain stage, and it then had to work on the rational soul, as it does today on the consciousness soul.

You see, in a certain sense there is now an intimate relationship between the human "I" and the three members of human soul nature: the sentient soul, the rational soul,

and the consciousness soul. Primarily, within these three members the human "I" lives its inner life; in our fifth post-Atlantean epoch it lives in the consciousness soul, and will live most deeply in it, because in the consciousness soul the pure "I" can come to expression unhindered, so to speak, by the other members. Indeed, we live in our time in an time in which the "I" has the great and special purpose of self-development, building on itself.

If we take a sort of prophetic glance into the future and what is to come—if we say that human beings will develop the spirit self, or manas, in the next, the sixth post-Atlantean epoch, then we recognize that spirit self really lies above the sphere of the "I." As matter of fact, human beings could not in the future develop the spirit self out of their own forces. However, if human beings are to develop the spirit self, they need help in a certain sense from what flows to Earth through the forces of higher beings. Human beings have reached the stage in the evolution of the "I" where they can, out of their own forces, develop only up to the consciousness soul. Such development, however, would not be complete if they do not anticipate, in a sense, what will reach its true, complete, self-impelled human evolution only at the Jupiter stage, the next embodiment of our planet. Up to the end of Earth evolution, human beings should develop the "I"; they will have had opportunity to accomplish this development within the sentient, intellectual, and consciousness souls. However, the actual spirit self will become a human possession only on Jupiter; only there will it become an appropriate human endowment. On Jupiter, human beings will have about the same relation to the spirit self that they have to the "I" on Earth. If human

beings develop the spirit self during the Earth period, they cannot relate to it as they do to the "I." We can say of our "I" that we, ourselves, are that; it is really our self. In the next, sixth post-Atlantean, the spirit self will have reached expression. Then we will not be able to address this spirit self as our self; rather, we will say that our "I" has developed to a certain stage, so that our spirit self can shine into it, as from higher worlds, as a kind of angel being, which we are not; it shines into us and takes possession of us. This is how our spirit self will appear to us; and only on Jupiter will it appear as our own being, as our "I" is now. This is how human evolution progresses.

Hence, in the next, the sixth post-Atlantean epoch, we will feel "drawn upward" toward something that shines into us. We will not say, "You, spirit self, within me." Rather, we will say, "I, participant in a being who shines into me from upper worlds, who directs and leads me, who, through the grace of higher beings, has become my guide. What will come to us only upon Jupiter as our very own, we shall feel in the sixth epoch as a kind of guide shining upon us from the higher worlds. And thus it will be later with the life spirit, or budhi, and with the spirit body, and so on. Thus, a time will come when human beings will speak of themselves other than they do today.

How do we speak of ourselves now in the sense of spiritual science? We say: I have three sheaths: my physical body, my etheric body, and my astral body. Within these I have my "I," the essential Earth possession, which is evolving within these three sheaths. These sheaths are, so to speak, my lower nature; I have grown beyond it, I look down to this, my lower nature; and I see where my "I" has become a

preparatory stage of my being, which will grow and evolve further and further. In the future, human beings will have to speak differently. We will say: I have not only my lower nature and my "I," but also a higher nature to which I look up as a part of me, as my sheaths, which I have from earlier stages. In the future, therefore, human beings will feel that they are placed midway, so to speak, between their lower and higher natures. The lower nature, we already know; the higher will appear in the future as if standing above, just as now the lower is below. So we may say that human beings grow from the fourth to the fifth, sixth, and seventh principles during Earth evolution, whereas the fifth, sixth, and seventh principles will not be his direct possession during the actual Earth evolution, but something to which humankind will gradually attain. We must, in fact, view the matter must in this way.

We will have to experience a time when we say: Certainly it was our Earth mission to develop our "I." However, with prophetic anticipation, we see something that is to develop in us on Jupiter. All that we now experience as human beings during our Earth evolution—that we "permeate" ourselves with human "I" nature; that during the earthly past up to the present, we have developed a finer fashioning of our lower principles; and that we will perfect the higher principles in the future—more advanced beings, whom we call angels, or *angeloi*, experienced on earlier planetary embodiments. Also the higher members of the hierarchy, the archangels, or *archangeloi*, and the *archai* have had this experience upon the earlier embodiments of our Earth planet, on Moon, Sun, and Saturn. For them, too, there was at the time a kind of fourth member

that they developed. Then, in the second half of the corresponding planetary embodiments, they anticipated what actually is to be fully developed in them on Earth, as for us the spirit self will be developed on Jupiter. They had not fully embodied it within themselves as their possession at that time, but looked up to it.

If we first look back to the old Moon evolution, we must speak of beings who then should have reached their seventh principle, just as we human beings during the Earth evolution come to the seventh principle—that is, not to embody it completely, but to look up to it. When we speak of luciferic beings, we refer to those who during the old Moon evolution remained in the condition in which a human being would be who, during the Earth evolution, had not brought the fifth, sixth and seventh principles to full development, but turned away from such development—who had perhaps stopped with the fourth or the fifth. The beings who were at the very diverse stages of luciferic beings were not fully evolved. Therefore, we can say that human beings came over from the old Moon evolution to Earth evolution. They came in such a way that those who completed the Moon evolution brought a normal development: their physical, ether, and astral bodies. On the Earth, quite properly, they should develop the “I,” into which they should then take up the other principles. Other beings who stand higher than humankind should already have developed on the Moon what, for them, corresponds to the human “I.” But they could have brought this Moon “I” to full development only if they had anticipated what for them would be fifth, sixth and seventh principles, of which they would have fully developed the fifth on Earth. They should have

reached their seventh principle; but these luciferic beings did not do so. They barely evolved the fifth or sixth; and thus did not stop with the fourth, but they did not bring the fourth to full development, because they did not anticipate the fifth, sixth and seventh principles, but stopped with the fifth or sixth.

We distinguish then classes of these Moon beings. First are those who had developed only their fifth principle, so that they were as we human beings would be if we should develop the spirit self in the sixth post-Atlantean epoch and then stop, not developing the sixth and seventh principles. Keep in mind this one class, who as luciferic beings had developed their fifth principle; then note another class of Moon beings of the luciferic sort who had developed their sixth principle but not their seventh. There were such at the beginning of the Earth evolution, when human beings began the development of their "I." Thus, we can ask: What was the situation for these beings at the beginning of the Earth evolution? There were beings there who eagerly expected to develop their sixth principle during the Earth evolution, luciferic beings, who had evolved on the Moon only as far as their fifth principle and wished to develop their sixth upon the Earth. Moreover, there were beings of the second class, who had already developed their sixth principle on the Moon, and who wished to develop their seventh on Earth. They expected that of Earth evolution. Then there was humankind, who came with three principles to develop the fourth. Thus, we can distinguish human beings awaiting an opportunity to develop their "I"; luciferic beings expecting to evolve their sixth principle; and luciferic beings who would evolve their seventh.

We shall disregard those who were ready to develop their fifth, but there were those.

Now you see we have distinguished three classes, so to speak, of microcosmic Earth beings, three classes of beings who arrived upon Earth evolution. Of the three classes, however, only one could win a physical body on the Earth; the conditions that the Earth presents for the development of a physical, fleshly body can be furnished only in conformity with its entire earthly relationship to a fourth human principle. The only being who could acquire a physical body was one who wished to develop the fourth principle as "I." The others, who wished to develop a sixth and a seventh principle, could not gain physical bodies for themselves. There is no possibility on Earth for the direct acquisition of physical human bodies by beings who come into Earth evolution so ill equipped to it. The possibility does not exist for the direct acquisition of such a physical body. What did these beings have to do? They had to realize that, of course, they cannot have direct access to a human physical body consisting of flesh and bones, for such bodies are for human beings who wish to develop their "I." Hence, we must take refuge in a kind of substitute physical body; we must search for human beings who belong to the most highly developed, that is, those who have evolved, let us say, their fourth principle. We must creep into these human beings, and in them our nature must work in such a way that they will be enabled to form their sixth or seventh principle. The consequence was that, among the ordinary human beings of ancient times, some appeared who could be possessed by higher luciferic beings. These naturally stood higher than humankind, since they were to form their sixth

or seventh principle, and human beings only their fourth. Such higher luciferic beings went about on Earth in earthly human bodies. They were the leaders of Earth humanity; they knew and understood much more and could do much more than other human beings could. We have accounts of these beings in ancient tales and legends, and it is told of them that here and there they were founders of great cities, were great leaders of peoples, and so on. They were not merely normal human beings on Earth but were those possessed by such higher luciferic beings—possessed in the best sense of the word. We can understand human earthly evolution only when we consider such things.

Because they cannot get human bodies for themselves, however, the less highly evolved of these beings especially are always trying to continue their evolution in the bodies of human beings. That is just what we have been able to characterize. luciferic beings always longed to continue their evolution as described—by possessing human beings. Moreover, they are still doing that today. Lucifer and his hosts work in the human soul; we are the stage for the luciferic evolution. While we human beings simply take the human earthly body to develop ourselves, luciferic beings take us and develop themselves in us. That is the temptation of human beings: that the luciferic spirits work in them.

Meanwhile these luciferic spirits have advanced, just as human beings have advanced. Many of them who stood on the threshold ready to evolve their sixth principle, for instance, when humankind entered the Atlantean time, are now already forming their seventh, though of course this evolution on Earth is abnormal. Such a spirit accomplishes this as follows: He takes possession of a person, perhaps

for only a few years, to make use of the experiences of that person, who in turn thus furthers his or her own evolution. This is not evil in human nature; because we can bring the consciousness soul to expression in our time, we can be possessed by luciferic spirits who are evolving their seventh principle. What does a person become when possessed by such a lofty luciferic spirit? One becomes a genius. However, because human beings are possessed while this higher being irradiates the real human nature, such individuals become impractical for ordinary accomplishments and work instead in some area as pioneers or leaders.

One may not speak of luciferic spirits as if they were completely hateful; because they develop themselves as parasites by entering human beings, they cause those possessed by such spirits and under their influence to work as inspired geniuses. Therefore, the luciferic spirits are necessary, and the gifted people of Earth are those in whom the luciferic spirit diligently works, usually for only a couple of years. If this were not the case, Eduard Schuré would not have been able to describe Lucifer sympathetically.¹ Lucifer is actually assigned a share in the great cultural progress of Earth, and it is narrow-minded in traditional Christianity to see in luciferic as only the wicked devil; it indicates nothing less than a gross lack of sophistication. We read in *Faust*, “Nature is sin; spirit is devil; they cherish between them doubt, their deformed bastard child.” Certainly, it is fitting for narrow, traditionally formed Christianity to call Lucifer the devil and to hate him; but those who understand human evolution know that the luciferic principle works in the

1 See Rudolf Steiner and Edouard Schuré, *The East in the Light of the West & The Children of Lucifer*, Blauvelt, NY: Spiritual Science Library, 1986.

genius. It is appropriate for spiritual scientists to view these things directly. Moreover, we would have no inducement to rise to our fifth and sixth principles if these spirits did not push us forward. The luciferic spirits are those to whom we really owe the forward thrust—given because they seek their own evolution, through which we are able to grow beyond our "I." It is said trivially that poets, geniuses, and artists grow above the narrowly confined human "I."

Therefore, in a certain way we look up to the luciferic spirits as to leaders of humanity. We must free ourselves from narrowness and all orthodox Christianity that calls Lucifer only a devil worthy of hatred. We must recognize the liberating character of the luciferic principle, which has also been ordained by the good gods; for it drives us out beyond ourselves during Earth evolution, so that we prophetically anticipate what will come to us as our own possession only during Jupiter and beyond. Thus, there exists on Earth a reciprocal influence of microcosmic beings who were present at the beginning of the Earth evolution—an influence that leads human beings forward while developing their "I." These are beings related to humanity in such a way that it must be admitted that they are higher than human beings, for they have evolved their fifth principle and are developing their sixth, or are already evolving their seventh, while humankind works only on the fourth. Thus, we see superhuman beings in these luciferic spirits—microcosmic superhuman beings.

Now we will turn aside from the spiritual beings we regard as luciferic and consider the nature of Christ. The Christ is radically different from other beings who share Earth evolution. He is a being of another order, a being

who remained behind not only during the Moon evolution, as the luciferic spirits did, but who, foreseeing the Moon evolution, actually remained behind even earlier, during the old Sun evolution. It was from a certain assured wisdom far above the human that he remained behind during the old Sun evolution. We cannot regard this being as microcosmic in the sense that applies to the other beings we have been considering; we have to regard as microcosmic beings those who were connected with this Earth evolution from its beginning. The Christ was not connected directly with Earth evolution, but with the Sun evolution. He was a macrocosmic being from the beginning of Earth evolution on, a being exposed to entirely different conditions of evolution from those of the microcosmic beings. In addition, his evolutionary conditions were of a special sort; they were such that this macrocosmic Christ being evolved the macrocosmic "I" outside earthly conditions.

For Christ's evolution it was normal to bring to "I" perfection, outside the Earth, an "I" of a macrocosmic sort, and then to descend to Earth. Therefore, for the evolution of the Christ being, when he descended from the macrocosm to our Earth, it was normal to bring into it the great impulse of the macrocosmic "I," in order that the microcosmic "I," the human "I," might take up this impulse, and be able to go forward in its evolution. It was normal for the Christ to have the macrocosmic "I" impulse—not the microcosmic "I" impulse—just as much evolved as human beings on Earth had developed the microcosmic. Thus, the Christ being is one who, in a certain sense, is like the human being, except that human beings are microcosmic and brought their four principles to expression microcos-

mically, and hence also have their "I" microcosmically as Earth "I"—but the Christ as cosmic "I." His evolution was such that he was great and significant because of the perfect development of this "I," which he brought to Earth. In addition, he had not the fifth macrocosmic principle, nor the sixth, for he will evolve these on Jupiter and on Venus in order to give them to humankind.

The Christ, then, is a fourfold being, including his macrocosmic "I," just as human beings are microcosmically fourfold. Moreover, just as the purpose of human beings on Earth is to develop their "I" to be able to *receive*, the Christ had to develop his "I" to be able to *give*. When he descended to Earth, his whole being focused on bringing his fourth principle to expression in its most perfected form. Now each macrocosmic principle has an inner relationship to its corresponding microcosmic principle; the fourth macrocosmic principle in the Christ corresponds to the fourth microcosmic principle in humankind, and the fifth in the Christ will correspond to the human spirit self.

Thus, the Christ entered his earthly course, bringing from the macrocosm to humankind what human beings were to evolve microcosmically, although the Christ brought it as a macrocosmic principle. He entered earthly evolution so that, during its course, he would not personally possess a fifth, sixth, and seventh principle, just as human beings in their own way do not possess them.

The Christ is a being who had evolved macrocosmically up to the fourth principle, and the evolution of his fourth principle during the earthly course involves Christ giving human beings everything that will enable them to evolve the "I."

If we take a complete survey, at the beginning of Earth evolution we have three classes of beings: human beings, who were to bring their fourth principle to full development on Earth; a class of luciferic beings who were to evolve their sixth principle; and a class of luciferic beings who were to develop their seventh principle. These were beings who, because they were ready to develop their sixth and seventh principles, stood higher than humankind—indeed, far above human beings in this respect. However, they also ranged above Christ in this sense; out of devotion to humanity, the Christ was to bring his fourth principle to expression on Earth. It will not be the Christ, let us say, that will quicken human beings in the future to give expression to something other than the true “I,” the innermost human being—to reach ever-higher stages. Rather, luciferic spirits will, in a certain sense, lead human beings out beyond themselves.

Anyone who looks at the matter superficially can say: Of course, the Christ stands lower than, say, luciferic spirits. This is because the Christ came to Earth with something related fully to the fourth principle in humankind. Consequently, he is not at all suited to lead human beings above themselves, but rather more deeply into their own soul being. He is suited to lead the individual human soul being increasingly *to itself*. Luciferic beings have evolved the fourth, fifth, and sixth principles, and hence stand in a certain sense higher than the Christ stands. In a practical sense, this will work out in the future so that, through the admission of the Christ principle into human nature, this human nature will become more and more deepened, will take up more and more light and love into its own being. Thus, human beings will have to feel *light* and *love* as

belonging to their self. The immeasurable deepening of the human soul—which will be the gift of the Christ impulse and work on forever. In addition, when the Christ comes (as represented in many lectures), he will work only to deepen human souls. The other spirits who have higher principles than the Christ does, though only microcosmic principles, will in a certain sense lead humankind out of itself. The Christ will deepen the inner life of human beings, but also make them humble; luciferic spirits will lead human beings out beyond themselves, making them wise, clever, talented, but also haughty in a sense; they will teach human beings that they could become superhuman, even during earthly evolution. Therefore, a luciferic impulse will be everything that leads human beings to rise above themselves in the future, so to speak, making them proud of their own human nature even here on Earth. However, what makes people more deeply sincere and brings their inner life to depths that can come only through the complete development of the fourth principle—that comes from the Christ.

People who look at the matter superficially will say that Christ really stands lower than luciferic beings, for he has developed only the fourth principle, and the others, higher principles. The difference is, however, that these other beings bring the higher principles as something parasitic, grafted upon human nature; but the Christ brings the fourth principle in such a way that it penetrates human nature, takes root within it, and fills it with power. Just as the fourth macrocosmic principle once permeated and empowered the fleshly body of Jesus of Nazareth, so will the fourth macrocosmic principle permeate the bodies of those who take the Christ into themselves. Just as the

fourth macrocosmic principle is the gift of Christ, so will the sixth and the seventh principles be the gifts of the luciferic spirits. In the future (and such time is now being prepared), we may find that people who lack understanding will say that, if we examine the Gospels or otherwise allow what Christ gave to humanity to work upon us, we see that in regard to his teaching he does not at all rank as high as perhaps other spiritual beings do who are connected with humanity. In a certain sense, they are higher than humankind is. They cannot penetrate the entire human being, but they take root in the intellect and create human genius. Moreover, those who observe only outwardly will say that such beings stand higher than the Christ does. A time will come when the most powerful, most significant of these luciferic spirits—who will wish to lead the people out beyond themselves, so to speak—will be extolled and viewed as a great human leader; it will be said that what the Christ was able to furnish was actually only a bridge. There are already those who question the value of the Gospel teachings and say that we have outgrown them. As we said, people will point to a lofty, versatile spirit, a spirit of genius, who will take possession of a human fleshly nature, which he will permeate with his genius. It will be said that he surpasses even the Christ, for the Christ was one who made it possible to develop the fourth principle, while this one makes it possible during the earthly evolution to attain the seventh principle.

Thus will the Christ spirit and the spirit of this being face one another—the *Christ spirit*, from whom humanity may hope to receive the great macrocosmic impulse of its

fourth principle, and the *luciferic spirit*, who will wish in a certain way to lead humanity beyond this.

If people would agree that we must acquire from the luciferic spirits only that to which we can look up in the same way that we look down to our lower nature, then they would be doing right. But if people should come to say: You see the Christ gives only the fourth principle, while these spirits give the sixth and seventh; people who think thus concerning Christ will worship and extol the *Antichrist*.

Thus will the position of the Antichrist toward the Christ make itself felt in the future. Moreover, with the outer intellect, with the outer wisdom, one will not be able to challenge such things. It will be possible to produce much that, from the point of view of the intellect and talent, will be more clever in the Antichrist than what will flow increasingly into the soul from the Christ as the highest human principle. Because Christ brings to humankind the fourth macrocosmic principle (and since it is macrocosmic, it is infinitely more important than all microcosmic principles and *stronger* than they are, even though it is related to the human "I," stronger than all others which can be gained during Earth evolution), and because it is only the fourth principle, it will be thought of as lower than the fifth, sixth and seventh, which come from the luciferic spirits; and especially lower than that which comes from Antichrist.

It is important that, upon the basis of spiritual science, it should be perceived that this is so. In regard to the Copernican theory, which has, as it were, set the Earth in motion, has snatched it from the repose in which it had earlier been placed. It has taken the Earth around the Sun. It has shown how the Earth is a grain of dust in the universe.

Regarding the Copernican theory it is asked: How can the Christian idea exist alongside this? A contradiction is constructed between the Christian thought and this natural science. For it is said that in ancient times, human beings could look up to the cross on Golgotha and to Christ; for the Earth seemed to them as the place chosen out of all the universe, and the other cosmic bodies seemed small to them and existing for the sake of the Earth. The Earth then appeared to man—so it could be said—worthy to bear the cross of Golgotha. But when the Copernican theory laid hold upon the spirits of men, they began to scoff and to say: The other cosmic bodies must have at least an equal significance with the Earth, so the Christ must have passed from one cosmic body to another; but since the other world bodies are much larger than the Earth, it would really be strange that the God-man should accomplish His work of redemption on the little Earth. A Scandinavian scholar actually said this. He was of the opinion that, with the Christ drama, it was just as if a powerful drama were presented on a little stage in a suburb, or in a village theater, instead of being presented on a great stage in a capital city. He said, “It is absurd that the greatest drama in the world should not be performed upon a great cosmic body. It is exactly as if a great production should not be given in a splendid theater, but in a miserable village theater.”

Such a speech is, of course, very peculiar, but we can reply that the Christian legend has taken care that nothing so foolish could be said; for it has not even laid the scene of this drama in a splendid place on Earth, but only in a poor stable. That fact already shows that no such objection should be made as that of the Scandinavian scholar.

People do not consider how inconsequential they are with their peculiarly wise thoughts. The idea has no effect in the presence of the great simple truth that the Christian legend gives. Moreover, if this Christian legend lays the scene of the birth of Jesus, not in a splendid, important capital city of the Earth, but in a poor stable, then it does not seem absurd that, in contrast to the greatest cosmic bodies, the Earth should have been chosen as the place to bear the cross. In general, the method by which the Christian teaching in its way sets forth what the Christ had to bring to humanity, is an indication of that great teaching that spiritual science is to give to us again today. If we allow the Gospels to work upon us, we can search there for the deepest truths of spiritual science, as we have often seen; but how are these great truths contained in the Gospels? Well, I might say that, if those who have not a spark of the Christ Impulse in them are to rise to an understanding of what is in the Gospels, they must absolutely rack their brains; there must even be a certain genius developed. Because so few have even the slightest understanding of the spiritual scientific interpretation of the Gospels, we can assume that normal human consciousness is incapable of it. Through luciferic forces, with the development of genius, the Gospels can be understood in a purely superficial way; but as they are presented, how do these truths confront us? They come to us as though gushing forth—the perfect, highest good, directly from the being of Christ without effort or exertion of any kind—and speaking in such a way to hearts that allow themselves to be permeated by the Christ impulse, so that souls are illuminated and warmed through and through. The way in which the greatest truths are thus presented to human beings is

the opposite of the cleverness. The method in the Gospels involves the fact that, in the direct, original, elemental way in which these truths gush forth perfectly from the fourth macrocosmic principle in Jesus Christ, they pass immediately to the people. Indeed, care has even been taken that human cleverness and the sagacity of everything luciferic in human evolution, shall give much sophisticated explanation of the words of Christ, and that we will only gradually be able to win through to their simplicity and grandeur and fundamental character; as with the words of Christ, so also with the facts concerning Christ.

If we present such a fact (say, as the Resurrection) by the means that spiritual science provide, what strange fact do we encounter? An important German theosophist said (even in the third decade of the nineteenth century) that we can see how the human intellect is being permeated increasingly by the luciferic principle. This was Troxler, who said that the human intellect was completely luciferic in all that it comprises. It is generally difficult to refer directly to the deeper theosophical truths; but those of you who attended my course of lectures in Prague² will recall that I referred to Troxler then to show how he already knew what we can now teach about the human ether body. He said that luciferic forces permeate the human intellect. Disregarding the luciferic forces, today if we wish to comprehend the Resurrection through good theosophical forces, we must show that, at the baptism by John in the Jordan, something significant occurred. There, the macrocosmic Christ being, who lived for three years on Earth, permeated the three

2 See Rudolf Steiner, *An Occult Physiology*, 8 lectures, Prague, March 20–28, 1911 (CW 128), London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2005.

bodies of the Luke Jesus boy. These bodies then passed through the Mystery of Golgotha with this Christ being. The development of Jesus Christ during the three years was naturally different from that of other human beings. We must investigate this development, so that, going into fundamental facts, and with the principles of spiritual science, we may comprehend what the Resurrection actually was.

Jesus of Nazareth stood by the Jordan. His "I" separated from the physical, etheric, and astral bodies, and the macrocosmic Christ being came down, took possession of these three bodies, and then lived until April 3. 33, as we have been able to determine. However, it was a different kind of life, since, beginning from the baptism, the life of Christ in the body of Jesus of Nazareth was a slow process of dying. With each advancing period of time during these three years, something of the sheaths of Jesus of Nazareth died away, so to speak. Slowly those sheaths died, so that after three years the entire body of Jesus of Nazareth was already close to the condition of a corpse, and was only held together by the power of the macrocosmic Christ being.

You must not presume that the body in which the Christ lived was like any other body, say, a year and a half after the John baptism in the Jordan. It was in such a state that ordinary human souls would have felt immediately that it was falling away, because only the powerful macrocosmic Christ being could hold it together. It was a constant, slow dying that continued through three years. In addition, his body had reached the verge of dissolution by the time that the Mystery of Golgotha occurred. Then it was necessary only that those mentioned in the narrative should come to the body with their strange preparation of spices and

bring about a chemical union between these special substances and the body of Jesus of Nazareth, in which the macrocosmic Christ being had dwelt for three years, and then that they should place it in the grave. It took very little to cause the body to become dust; and the Christ spirit clothed himself with an ether body, condensed, as it were, to become physically visible. Thus, the risen Christ was enveloped in a condensed, visible ether body, and thus he moved about and appeared to those to whom he could appear. He was not visible to everyone, because it was actually only a condensed etheric body that the Christ bore after the Resurrection; the body placed in the grave disintegrated and became dust. Moreover, according to the latest esoteric investigations, it is confirmed that there was an earthquake. It was astonishing to me to discover, after I had found from esoteric investigation that an earthquake had taken place, that this is indicated in Matthew's Gospel. The Earth divided, and the dust of the corpse fell in to become united with the entire substance of the Earth. As a result of that violent shaking of the Earth, the clothes were placed as they were said to have been found, according to the description in the John Gospel. It is described wonderfully in the Gospel of St. John.

In this way, we must understand the Resurrection esoterically, and we need not at all come into contradiction with the Gospels. I have often called attention to the fact that Mary Magdalene did not recognize the Christ when he met her. How could one possibly fail to recognize someone whom one had seen only a few days earlier, especially such an important personality as Jesus Christ was? If it is said that Mary Magdalene did not know him, then he must

have appeared to her in another form. She recognized him only when she heard him speak. Then she became aware of him.

All the details of the Gospels are entirely comprehensible esoterically. However, some might say that Thomas was challenged by the risen Christ when he appeared to the disciples, to feel the scars with his hands; it must be supposed that the scars were still there—that Christ had come to the disciples with the same body which had been resolved to dust. No. Imagine that someone has a wound; the etheric body contracts in a special way and forms a kind of scar. And in the specially contracted ether body, from which were drawn the constituents of the new ether body with which the Christ clothed himself, these wound marks were made visible—were peculiarly thickened spots—so that even Thomas could feel that he was dealing with a reality.

This is a remarkable passage in an esoteric sense. It does not contradict in any way the fact that we are dealing with an ether body, condensed to visibility by the Christ force, and that then the Emmaus scene could occur as well. We find it described in the Gospel, not as an ordinary receiving of nourishment, but dissolution of the food directly by the ether body, through the Christ forces, without the cooperation of the physical body.

All these things can be understood today through esoteric principles, or spiritual science. Apart from the poorly translated passages, we can understand the Gospels literally in a certain way. Everything becomes clear in a wonderful way, and those who have understood this will feel too stupid when they notice a contradiction. They will feel that they

are not as smart as the modern theologians who say, “We are unable to comprehend the Resurrection as described in the Gospels.” Nevertheless, once we understand the principles, we can comprehend it exactly thus.

How does everything that has now been said work upon the human reason? Well, it affects people in such a way that they say, “If I am to believe the Resurrection, then I shall have to set aside all that I have gained until now through reason. That I cannot do, therefore the Resurrection must be effaced.” The reason that speaks thus is so permeated by Lucifer that it cannot comprehend such matters. Increasingly, such reason will come to reject the great, effective, elementary language and facts of earlier times, and those connected with the Mystery of Golgotha. However, spiritual science will be called upon to comprehend these things, even to the smallest details. It will not reject what, as fifth, sixth, and seventh principles, can transcend the fourth macrocosmic principle. Nevertheless, it will see in the fourth macrocosmic principle the greatest impulse that has been given to the Earth evolution.

From this, you see that in a certain way it is not easy to understand the Christ evolution within the Earth, because, in a sense, the argument is justified that particular luciferic spirits lead up to other principles, but only to microcosmic principles. I expressed this earlier when I said that the Christ is a sort of focal point, in which the being works through his deed; the being works through what he is. Around the Christ sit the twelve bodhisattvas of the world, upon whom flows all that comes from the Christ, and they elevate it, in the sense of increased wisdom, to higher principles. Nevertheless, it all flows from the fourth principle—

even upon the higher principles—insofar as these evolve on Earth. Consequently, there is much error about the uniqueness of the Christ. There is no clear understanding that, in the Christ, we are dealing with the fourth principle, the fourth *macrocosmic* principle. Although higher principles can be developed, these are only the microcosmic principles of beings who have not come to full development on the Moon, but who in their way transcend the human. Because they came to development during the Moon evolution, they developed on their part upon the Moon what human beings must evolve only upon the Earth.

We must rise to an understanding of such things if we would comprehend the true place of the Christ principle within our Earth evolution and if we wish to understand why in the future the Antichrist will be regarded more highly in many ways than the Christ himself. The Antichrist will perhaps be found to be more clever, possessed of more genius than the Christ; he will win a powerful following, but spiritual scientists should be prepared in advance to avoid being deceived by what has now been described. Above all, it will be necessary to be firmly established in the good principles of spiritual science in order not to be deceived in this realm.

It was the foremost mission of the esotericism developed in the West since the twelfth century, and about which much has been said, to work out clearly what is to be said about the nature of the Christ in this regard. Those who are firmly established in this esotericism will increasingly recognize that it is a focal position that the Christ occupies in the earthly evolution. In addition, concerning all so-called reincarnations of the Christ on our Earth, one can

present this simple comparison: Just as a balance must be supported at only one point, not at two or more, likewise earthly evolution must have one basic impulse. Anyone who acknowledges several incarnations of the Christ makes the same mistake as those who think that scales function properly when supported in two places; such would no longer be a scale. Moreover, anyone who has been on Earth in several incarnations would not be Christ. This is a fact that any well-informed esotericist will assert about the nature of Christ. Thus, by a simple comparison we may always point to the uniqueness of the Christ nature; and here the Gospels and spiritual science are in complete accord.